

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2004-193 -EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional):

PROJECT NAME: Texas Camp Ponds 2004

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Proposed Pond Locations				
Pond Number	Township	Range	Section	Quarter/Quarter
1	3 S	100 W	7	SENW
2	3 S	100 W	7	SWSW
3	3 S	100 W	7	SWSW
4	3 S	100 W	7	SWSW
5	3 S	100 W	19	SENE
6	3 S	101 W	12	NESE
7	3 S	101 W	23	SESW

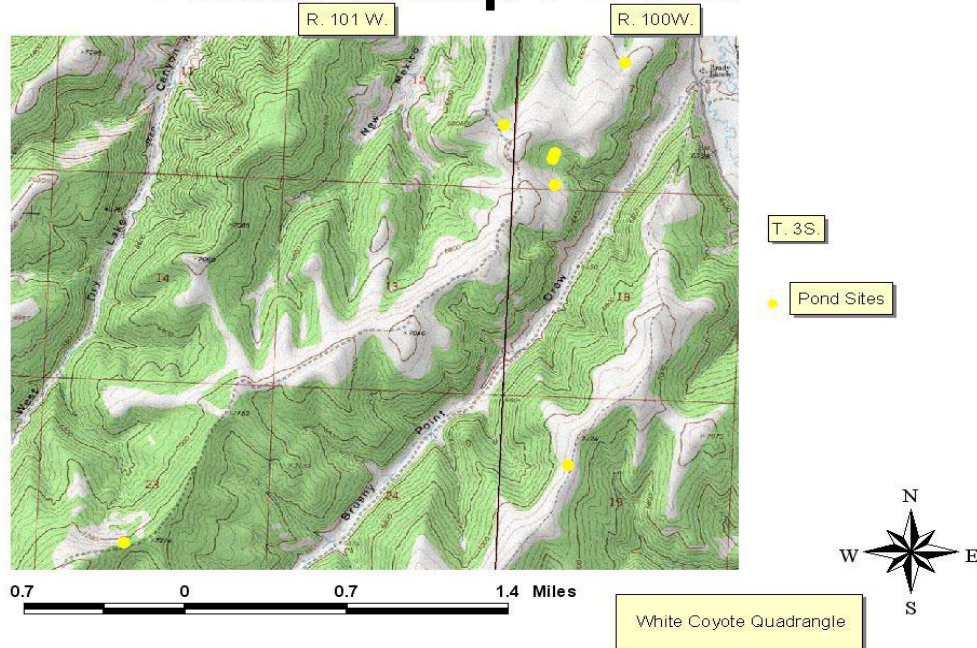
APPLICANT: Bryant 1991 Trust

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: Wayne Pennell, grazing permittee for the East Douglas Creek allotment has requested a permit to construct seven stock ponds. The need for the ponds is to provide a source of water for livestock in an area which currently has insufficient water. Increasing the number of water sources will improve the distribution of livestock. Currently cattle either water at a pond along East Douglas Creek or East Douglas Creek itself and then trail to the Texas Creek Chainings for forage. These ponds would decrease grazing use along East Douglas Creek, Brushy point and Trail Canyon.

Proposed Action: Applicant will construct three ponds (5, 6, 7) along existing roads (road pits), and four ponds (1, 2, 3, 4,) in the heads of draws. The road pits will be located at existing water bars and will collect water that has been gathered by the road. These road pits will be small, estimated at 20' X 20' X 5'. The size of the headwater pits is estimated at 40' X 40' X 8'. Pond construction is to take place during the spring/summer of 2005 by either the BLM force account crew or the permittee. Access to construction sites will be by existing roads or trails, or by driving construction equipment off-road to the pond location. See below map for pond locations.

Texas Camp Ponds



The proposed action would include the following Mitigation Measures:

1. BLM is responsible for revegetation. Following construction, BLM will seed all disturbed surface with adapted soil holding grass species, seed mix number 7. Seed will be broadcast applied.
2. On second and fifth years following construction, BLM will survey the vicinity of the ponds for noxious weeds. If weeds are found, BLM will initiate control efforts based on the weed species and size of the infestation. If chemical control is warranted this would be undertaken with a current pesticide use proposal.
3. Prior to starting any earth disturbing activity, a qualified archaeologist or paraprofessional, as appropriate, approved by BLM, will conduct a Class III (100% pedestrian) cultural resource inventory on all proposed areas that have not been previously inventoried.
4. If, in its operations, the permittee or construction crew discovers any cultural remains, monuments or sites, or any object of antiquity subject to the Antiquities Act of June 8, 1906 (34 Stat. 225; 16 U.S.C. secs 431-433), the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (Public Law 96-95), and 43 CFR. Part 3, the permittee or construction crew shall immediately cease activity and report directly to the Area Manager. The Bureau shall then take such action as required under the Acts and regulations thereunder. The permittee or construction crew shall follow the mitigation requirements set forth by BLM concerning protection, preservation, or disposition of any sites or material discovered.

5. Following construction, maintenance of the ponds would be the responsibility of the grazing permittee. A Cooperative Agreement will specify this requirement.
6. After ponds are constructed, BLM will post signs to prevent vehicle use of disturbed areas.

No Action Alternative: The no-action alternative is the proposed ponds would not be constructed.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: None

NEED FOR THE ACTION: The need for the ponds is to provide a source of water for livestock in an area which currently has insufficient water. Increasing the number of water sources will improve the distribution of livestock.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-23, "identification of range improvements to enhance rangeland productivity and management."

Decision Language: The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

The action is in conformance with the decisions/pages of the plan listed above.

**AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES /
MITIGATION MEASURES:**

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a

finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by the proposed action

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. However, airborne particulate matter should not exceed Colorado air quality standards on an hourly or daily basis. Following successful seeding of the sites, airborne particulate matter should return to near pre-construction levels.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: None

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The area of each pond has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Selle 2005, Compliance Dated 2/7/2005) with no new cultural resources recorded for any of the pond locations.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the Authorized Officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)

- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Site inventory of the pond sited did not find any noxious weeds to be present. In the area several noxious weeds can be found including; houndstongue, burdock, spotted and Russian knapweed, bull, musk and Canada Thistle. All of these weeds are adapted to the sites on which the ponds would be built. All of the ponds are within the boundaries of the Texas Camp chain and seed project completed in the mid-1960s and prescribed burned in 2002. These chainings were seeded with crested wheatgrass to provide livestock forage.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The ponds would be seeded with non-native grass species as they are adapted to the site, are relatively grazing tolerant and would match the grass species seeded in the area. These species would adequately stabilize soils and provide competition against noxious weed establishment and spread. Following mitigation measures for monitoring and control of noxious would prevent spread of noxious weeds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts.

Mitigation: As described in the proposed action.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: The proposed ponds are located in immature pinyon/juniper woodlands. Other dominant shrub and ground cover includes Gambel oak, mountain mahogany, crested wheatgrass, elk sedge, western wheatgrass and various forbs. This area was previously chained and seeded with crested wheatgrass in the 1960s. In 2002, the chainings were burned in an effort to remove pinyon-juniper seedlings and unwanted debris. Pinyon-juniper woodlands

and mountain shrub provide nesting habitat for a variety of migratory birds including gray flycatcher, black-throated gray warbler, Virginia's warbler and blue grouse. A number of these woodland and shrubland associates have been identified as having higher conservation interest, but in each case, these populations are stable and well distributed in the Resource Area at appropriate densities in extensive suitable habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: It is unlikely the construction of these ponds would have any negative impacts on nesting activities. Disturbance associated with these ponds is site-specific and is scheduled to be completed in a short timeframe (approximately one week). The ponds occur either along existing roads (sites 5, 6, 7) or in areas with low shrub densities (sites 1, 2, 3, 4). These habitats typically assume low nest density and are unlikely to involve species of high conservation interest. The proposed action will reduce the intensity of use in valleys of East Douglas, New Mexico and Brushy Point by 50%. This would increase the residual ground cover during the nesting season and would be expected to enhance foraging opportunities for insectivorous and granivorous birds and their broods.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would maintain heavy grazing use of the bottoms during the nesting season resulting in decreased availability of ground cover and foraging opportunities for migratory birds.

Mitigation: None

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no threatened, endangered or sensitive species that inhabit or derive important benefit from these sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitat.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed action would have no effective influence on populations or habitat associated with special status species.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is in the East Douglas watershed tributary to Douglas Creek and the White River, which is a major sub basin of the Colorado River System. A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified. This proposed action is in a Category 1, Priority 2, watershed (The Lower White) identified in the Unified Watershed Assessment report. The state has reasons to believe this watershed has water quality problems (sediment and salinity loads) that may impair the watershed. Information needs to be gathered before total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) will be determined. Its designated beneficial uses are: Aquatic Life Cold 1, Recreation 1a, Water Supply and Agriculture. The state has further defined water quality parameters with table values. These standards reflect the ambient water quality and define maximum allowable concentrations for the various water quality parameters. The anti-degradation rule applies to this segment meaning no further water quality degradation is allowable that would interfere with or become harmful to the designated uses.

East Douglas Creek is typically intermittent. High runoff generally occurs from mid-March through mid-June and is caused primarily by melting of the higher elevation snowpack. Transitional months are usually March and July. Early season runoff is generally from lower elevation snowmelt and may provide a separate and lower discharge peak than the main peak in the hydrograph, which usually occurs in late May and early June.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Implementation of the planned ponds will aid in watershed stabilization through better livestock distribution, with the primary goal being a sustained yield of cleaner water, a decrease in soil loss, and an increase in vegetation cover that protects a watershed. Therefore, the proposed stock ponds would have a

beneficial impact to water quality by reducing sediment transport into the White River and subsequently the Colorado River.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Current problems would continue in the existing environment including impacts to the alluvial valleys, soils, and water quality. There would be continued accelerated erosion of the area through upstream migration of actively cutting gullies. Current problems of channelization, loss of soil, salinity and sediment transport to the White River would continue.

Mitigation: No additional mitigation is required.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The proposed action would result in the Colorado Public Land Health Standard #5 (water quality) being met within the project area.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: Riparian areas of East Douglas Creek are located immediately north of the project sites. This creek is rated as functioning and is accessed by livestock at only two locations (watergaps).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Livestock would continue to use the water-gaps to access East Douglas Creek but at a decreased level estimated a 50%. Both of the water-gaps are small accessing approximately 30 feet of stream-bank. Given the limited area of these water-gaps and the inability of the livestock to water elsewhere along the creek, these sites are expected to remain in a disturbed condition. Overall the watergaps protect 99% of the stream channel.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Same as the Proposed Action.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: Over ninety-nine percent of East Douglas Creek is in proper functioning condition.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, ACECs, Wild and Scenic Rivers, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants exist within the area affected by the proposed action. For threatened, endangered and sensitive plant species Public Land Health Standard is not applicable since neither the proposed nor the no-action alternative would have any influence on populations of, or habitats potentially occupied by, special status plants. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: Baseline soils data have been collected for Rio Blanco County by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and are published in an order III Soil Survey. This survey is available for review from the White River Field Office. The table below identifies soil characteristics for the soils encountered from the proposed action.

Proposed Ponds --Soil Type and Characteristics						
Pond Number	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological Site	Run off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
1, 2, 3, 4, 6	Redcreek-Rentsac complex	5-30%	PJ woodlands/PJ woodlands	Very high	Moderate to high	10-20
5, 7	Rentsac-Moyerson-Rock Outcrop complex	5-65%	PJ Woodlands/Clayey Slopes	Medium	Moderate to very high	10-20

Revegetation limitations for these soil types include an arid climate and droughty soil condition. None of these pond locations are on soils delineated as being fragile or slopes greater than 35 percent.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Impacts to soils would be similar to any surface disturbing activity, which are loss of topsoil, soil compaction and possible increase in sediment to local waterways. These impacts would be temporary until the protective vegetative cover has been reestablished. Mitigation identified in the proposed action would help minimize these short-term impacts.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Without the implementation of the proposed action, runoff from roads, a large contributor of increased suspended sediment, would continue as well as streambank degradation from overuse from cattle. Providing alternative water sources is consistent with the objectives of the White River ROD/RMP.

Mitigation: No additional mitigation is necessary.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The soils associated with the proposed action are and will continue to be within the criteria of standard 1 for Public Land Health Standards.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: All of the ponds are on a pinyon/juniper woodland site that has been chained and seeded in the 1960s. Crested wheatgrass was seeded following chaining and is still a common component of the plant community. These chainings were burned in 2002 to remove debris from chaining and to remove pinyon and juniper seedlings. Plant species found on site include; crested wheatgrass, elk sedge, Gambel oak, mountain mahogany, elk sedge, western wheatgrass and various forbs.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There would be site specific disturbance of vegetation associated with construction activities. Livestock grazing would increase in the area serviced by the water sources. This use would decrease grazing pressure along East Douglas creek where there is a pond and watergap into the creek. On most years grazing along East Douglas creek, New Mexico Draw and Brushy Point Draw has been high because of the inability to use upland water sources. The prescribed burns of the Texas Camp chainings has removed debris and sapling trees, resulting in a release of grass production. Use of East Douglas creek, New Mexico Draw and Brushy Point Draw is expected to be decreased by approximately one-half. Decreasing the intensity of grazing in the bottoms is expected to allow western wheatgrass to increase in density and production.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts. Suboptimal livestock distribution and the resulting over-use of the bottoms would continue to maintain early seral plant communities.

Mitigation: As described in the proposed action.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Uplands are an introduced forage type which meets the standards for vegetation health. These plant communities are resistant to grazing and would not decline in composition or production. The plant communities found in the bottoms are early seral communities that do not meet the standards for plant communities and would benefit from decreased intensity of grazing use. These bottom communities are expected to improve in composition and cover of desired species and meet the standard.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed ponds are located approximately 0.5 miles (pond 1) to 3.2 miles (pond 7) south-southwest of East Douglas Creek. Livestock are currently able to access East Douglas Creek through the use of two 30-foot water-gaps.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There is no reasonable likelihood the proposed action would have a negative influence on aquatic wildlife or habitat. The closest pond is located nearly 0.5 miles from East Douglas Creek, thereby precluding any possibility of increased sedimentation to the water source. This action involves minimal surface disturbance and therefore would have no increased negative influence on the condition or function of aquatic wildlife or habitat associated with East Douglas Creek. Livestock, which currently use the water

gaps along East Douglas Creek, would continue to do so, but at a decreased level estimated at 50% (see discussion in Wetland/Riparian section).

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no affect on aquatic wildlife or associated habitats under the no action alternative.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Development of these ponds would have no conceivable influence on the condition or function of aquatic wildlife or associated habitats and therefore would have no influence on continued maintenance of associated land health standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Ponds 5, 6 and 7 are located in elk severe winter range, an area which is typically used heavily by elk during the late winter months. One of the most important functions of these ranges is fulfilled during the early spring periods (late March through early May) when big game is most vulnerable to the influences of poor nutrition and extraneous energy demands (e.g., winter season recovery, last stages of gestation). The proposed action lies along the edge of mule deer summer and winter ranges, areas that are most heavily use during the spring and fall months.

Raptors, such as red-tailed and rough-legged hawks may opportunistically forage throughout the area, however, the immature pinyon-juniper woodlands located throughout the proposed action do not provide suitable substrate for raptor nesting. No narrowly distributed or highly specialized species or sub specific populations are known to occur in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Construction activities are scheduled to take place outside the critical timeframe imposed for mule deer and elk ranges. There is no reasonable likelihood that the proposed action would have any negative influence on big game distribution. Disturbance associated with these ponds is site-specific and will be completed in a short time-frame (approximately one week). The proposed action would help reduce livestock use in the bottoms and expand use in upland, resulting in the increased availability of succulent spring growth (i.e., reduced use intensity in bottoms, removal of wolfy bunchgrass growth in uplands) for use by gestating deer.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Heavy use of these bottomlands likely suppresses the abundance of non game mammals and birds. The no action alternative would result in a typical use pattern – heavy livestock use in productive bottomland situations. Failure to construct these ponds will forego an opportunity to pre-condition residual bunchgrass growth in uplands for use by deer.

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The proposed action would help moderate the influence of livestock grazing use in valley bottoms and more effectively meet the land health standard for appropriate abundance of diversity and communities.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management	X		
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs in an area designated as “open seasonally” for motorized vehicles. Motorized vehicles are limited to existing roads and trails from October 1 through April 30 each year. BLM roads 1242 and 1195 will be used to access project sites.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: New routes may be created to ponds 1, 2, 3 and 4 by construction equipment and then enhanced by other public users.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: Motorized vehicles used to construct ponds 1, 2, 3 and 4 will go “blade up” as to not create new trail to access ponds. Sign routes to ponds 1, 2, 3 and 4 as closed to motorized use while routes revegetate.

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed ponds are located in an area mapped as the Mesa Verde Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition 1 formation, meaning it is a known producer of scientifically important fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Provided there is no excavation into the underlying bedrock formation to construct the ponds there will be no new impacts to fossil resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: The proposed projects are within the East Douglas Creek allotment. This allotment is grazed on a year-round basis by approximately 300 cattle. The area surrounding the proposed projects is used during the winter and spring. The lack of water on the chainings has prevented proper distribution of livestock. These ponds were proposed as they would draw cattle out of East Douglas, New Mexico and Brushy Point draws decreasing grazing use on these areas. These ponds would take advantage of forage developed from the Texas Camp chaining and seeding project, which was prescribed, burned in 2002.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed projects would benefit the livestock management program by increasing the available forage during the spring period through improved distribution. Improving forage composition and production in the bottoms would benefit the livestock operation.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Livestock would continue to congregate in the bottoms of East Douglas, New Mexico and Brushy Point maintaining these areas in a sub-optimal condition in terms of composition and production. Upland forage would not be used at potential.

Mitigation: None

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: There are several rights-of-way facilities located within the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Canyon Gas Resources has several pipeline rights-of-way that crisscross the project area: COC25359E, COC25359H, and COC24402AA. BTU Energy has right-of-way COC48513 for a pipeline and COC54616 for an access road. TBI Production has a road right-of-way COC54572. Questar (COC30109) and Northwest Pipeline (COC24402U) also have pipeline facilities in the area.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, there would not be any impacts.

Mitigation: Before any dirt work is undertaken, the Colorado “One Call” system needs to be implemented (800-922-1987). Also, the pipeline right-of-way holders need to be contacted to make sure that the project isn’t going to affect their facilities.

VISUAL RESOURCE

Affected Environment: Ponds 2, 6 and 7 are within a VRM class III area. The objective of class III is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. Ponds 1, 3, 4 and 5 are within a VRM class II area. The objective of class II is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may be seen, but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is small in scale relative to the surrounding landscape; therefore, any modifications will be unseen to the casual observer, and VRM II and III objectives will be met. Furthermore, any disturbed vegetation will return making the action virtually unnoticeable within a period of a few years.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No impact on visual resources.

Mitigation: Remove as little vegetation as possible during construction.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This project would improve vegetation composition and cover, benefiting the soil, water and vegetation resources and the animals’ dependant on these resources.

REFERENCES CITED:

Selle, Michael R.

2005 Cultural Resource Inventory of the Seven Proposed Texas Camp Ponds, Rio Blanco County. White River Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, Meeker, Colorado.

Tweto, Odgen

1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Carol Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Bob Fowler	Forester	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Carol Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Bob Fowler	Forester	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Carol Hollowed	Planning and Environmental Coordinator	Soils
Bob Fowler	Forester	Vegetation
Lisa Belmonte	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Bob Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Bob Fowler	Forester	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2004-193-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve construction of the seven ponds described in this Environmental Assessment, subject to the mitigation measures described below. This project will be authorized under a Range Cooperative Agreement.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. BLM is responsible for revegetation. Following construction, BLM will seed all disturbed surface with adapted soil holding grass species, seed mix number 7. Seed will be broadcast applied.
2. On second and fifth years following construction, BLM will survey the vicinity of the ponds for noxious weeds. If weeds are found, BLM will initiate control efforts based on the weed species and size of the infestation. If chemical control is warranted this would be undertaken with a current pesticide use proposal.
3. Prior to starting any earth disturbing activity, a qualified archaeologist or paraprofessional, as appropriate, approved by BLM, will conduct a Class III (100% pedestrian) cultural resource inventory on all proposed areas that have not been previously inventoried.
4. If, in its operations, the permittee or construction crew discovers any cultural remains, monuments or sites, or any object of antiquity subject to the Antiquities Act of June 8, 1906 (34 Stat. 225; 16 U.S.C. secs 431-433), the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (Public Law 96-95), and 43 CFR. Part 3, the permittee or construction crew shall immediately cease activity and report directly to the Area Manager. The Bureau shall then take such action as required under the Acts and regulations thereunder. The permittee or construction crew shall follow the mitigation requirements set forth by BLM concerning protection, preservation, or disposition of any sites or material discovered.
5. Following construction, maintenance of the ponds would be the responsibility of the grazing permittee. A Cooperative Agreement will specify this requirement.

6. After ponds are constructed, BLM will post signs to prevent vehicle use of disturbed areas.
7. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the Authorized Officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:
 - whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
 - the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
 - a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

8. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.
9. The applicant shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.
10. Motorized vehicles used to construct ponds 1, 2, 3 and 4 will go “blade up” as to not create new trail to access ponds. Sign routes to ponds 1, 2, 3 and 4 as closed to motorized use while routes revegetate.
11. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.
12. Before any dirt work is undertaken, the Colorado “One Call” system needs to be implemented (800-922-1987). Also, the pipeline right-of-way holders need to be contacted

to make sure that the project isn't going to affect their facilities.

13. Remove as little vegetation as possible during construction.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Monitoring of vegetation and riparian resources is in place and would continue. The Range Specialist would be responsible conducting the Rangeland Cooperative Agreement subject to current regulation and guidance, and would be responsible for monitoring/implementing/delegating the mitigation measures described above.

NAME OF PREPARER: Robert Fowler

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: *CR Followed*

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: *Thunt R. Walter*
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: *4/18/05*

ATTACHMENTS: Location Map of the proposed action

Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2004-193-EA

